

THE  
RULE  
OF  
FAITH.



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Н Т І А Й

THE  
R U L E  
*K* O F  
F A I T H

Truly Stated,  
IN A  
New and Easy Method;  
Or a Key to  
CONTROVERSY.

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*All Scripture is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness.* 2 Tim. 3. v. 16.

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Printed in the Year 1721.

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## P R E F A C E.

LIVING, as we do, in an Age, in which the Mathematicks have been so successfully applied to many useful parts of Knowledge, it will not be a matter of any great surprize, to see Euclid's Forms set up, towards the discovery of Truths of a much higher Nature. Which yet, besides their intrinsic value, have little to recommend them. For Piety and Religion are none of the most modish Studies. And if some Gentlemen had the modelling of the Nation, 'tis more than an equal Wager, the very Name of a Christian would soon be out of Fashion. The next English Generation might be profess Turks, and the next but one, Hottentotes, and Atheists. For know'd Er-

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rrors will easily prevail, with Men of no Principles, to change the Bible for the Alcoran: And the next step will be far more reasonable, to lay both aside.

I should pass beyond the bounds of my Subject, as well as those of a private Station, should I pretend to trace the causes of this growing Evil up to the Fountain-Head. Besides, it may possibly rise from more Sources than one. And after all, who knows but the spring may be a Secret, and not expos'd to every Un-sanctified Enquirer.

But be that as it will, 'tis an obvious remark, that an infallible means of ruining any Man's Reputation, how deserving soever, is to set him up higher than his Character will bear. 'Tis the same with Books. And I have reason to fear, that something of this kind has happen to the best that ever was Pen'd: I mean to the Holy Scripture it self. Is it not then the Word of God? It is. And can we esteem the Word of God too much? We cannot. The Bible therefore, as to its Origin, cannot be over valued.

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valued. But when we consider it as a Rule of Faith, or as it directs Men to Salvation, the Effects, which it has upon the Mind, are part of the Enquiry. And of these we must speak with Caution. For altho' the written Word be truly the Word of God, yet it has not all the Effects, which fanciful Men may ascribe to it. Nor does it lose any thing of its real Worth (much less does it merit that Contempt, which Men of no Religion cast upon it) because it does not answer all those Purposes and Ends, which had never been thought on, had not the Indiscretion or the By-Intentions of false and weak Admirers brought them to light.

However it is, the Rule of Faith is so very deserving a Subject, that as it may call upon the Reader's Attention, so it shall be modestly treated. If I run into any Mistake, I don't desire he should follow me, unless it be to give me his Hand, and to help me out. But if the Scripture or plain Reasons be my Seconds,

## P R E F A C E.

I shall take it unkindly to be deserted by him.

As to the bold Title of Postulata, Principles or Supposals, 'tis what an imagin'd Evidence occasion'd. But the Reader is at full Liberty to un-christen them, if he thinks fit; and may call them Theses, Rules, Tenets, Positions, or whatever else he pleases, Articles of Religion only excepted. For of these we have more already, than are generally believed, even by those that Swear to 'em.

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# THE RULE of FAITH

Briefly Consider'd, &c.

HERE was a Time, how strange soever it may perhaps appear to After-ages, when the best of Islands was not the Seat of Irreligion, when Conscience could out-weigh an Estate, when Happiness in reversion was accounted a valuable Purchase, when a Man might practise the Gospel, without seeming ridiculous; and profess his Creed, without incurring the Censure either of Bigotry or Madness.



In those more early Days, Blaspheming the Trinity would not have past for a Recommendation to publick Esteem: Much less would the repeated EDITIONS of such a daring Impiety, have rais'd a Fund for an undeserving Buffoon, and put the Nation under a general Contribution to relieve his Pen. But as this Journey-Man Scribler and his worthy Masters, the Reformers and Refiners of the Age, have not yet carried their discoveries so far, as to convince the three Kingdoms entirely, that the Gospel is a Cheat, and Religion a Bubble, we may still venture to be *Christians*, and even believe that *Christian Faith* and *Worship* are necessary to Salvation. *Jesus being the only Name under Heaven, given to Men, whereby we must be saved,* Act. iv. v. 12..

Now if Christianity be a matter of Importance, the next Enquiry, of course, will be, *What is the Rule of Christian Belief?* That plain Scripture is such a Rule, all Parties, I suppose are agreed. For surely he must be a great Proficient in the now so much valued Art of Scepticism, who dares not rely on the plain word of God.

But if we pursue the Question one step farther, and ask, *Whether plain Scripture BE THE ONLY RULE, or not, of Christian*

rian Belief? Here we don't find all in the same Road. Different Systems, Interests, and Idea's file off into different Answers: Geneva takes one course: Rome another; An English Divine joins entirely with neither, but steers more or less towards each, as he is more or less devoted to the *Hierarchy*. If under the direction of levelling Principles; he thinks every Man wise enough, how illiterate or ignorant soever, to be his own *Guide to Eternity*. If Convenience links him to the Church, he finds primitive *Tradition* of excellent use, both for *Episcopacy*, for the *Sign of the Cross*, and for *Infant-baptism*: And in these Instances it may decently perform the Office of a *necessary Interpreter*. Besides, if *Tradition* be utterly laid aside, we should lose the *Scripture*. And altho' he is no Stranger to the unparallel'd Degeneracy and Corruptions of the Age, yet this he looks upon as the very worst of all its pernicious Mistakes, that it quite overlooks *Church-men*, as to the brightest part of their Character, which is that of being *necessary Guides* to Salvation. He can read in every page of the Gospel, the *Sacerdotal Order* instituted by *Christ*, as a Center of Unity. He finds the Apostles

and Elders' *Act.* 15. interpose their Authority in the first Christian Controversy. And is surprized, that their Apostolical Successors must stoop to the Insignificancy of a needless Direction. Next, he has a competent Provision of warm Texts, relating to the Guilt of Schism, and against Dissenters. But to speak my Thoughts freely, as it becomes an English-man, if these Scripture-Testimonies have any Dependence on the First of Elizabeth, and a Legal Establishment, they may possibly recoil, and even bring upon the Manager, whether he will or not, the Guilt of Schism without changing his Side. Not that I suspect, this will happen : But that the bare Possibility is a Demonstration, that he is neither Master of the Ground, on which his Artillery stands, nor Invulnerable by it. And that, if it were let off by other Hands, it would do as much Execution to the full as by his own. So that those very Texts, by which he learnedly proves the Anabaptists and Presbyterians to be Schismatics, may, after all, leave him no Gap open to avoid the terrible Guilt of Schism, but only by turning Presbyterian or Anabaptist. From whence 'tis obvious to infer, that Arguments, which great Men urge, sometimes even to

to the losing of their Temper, are not always equal to the Managers, but may be inconclusive, weak, and trivial.

But without entring into Parties and Politicks, the Question is not, what has been said, but what ought to be said, concerning the entire *Rule of Christian Faith*. The *whole Rule*, I say, is my Task : And that it may rise in the fairest View, I shall lay the Grounds of it in the following *Postulata*. For these I do not bespeak the Reader's Favour. Men of Interest, and Parties, will have the same Contempt for them, as they have for Religion. But if I can make it appear, that the Foundations, of what I advance, lye deep, and are supported either by *undeniable Reason* or *plain Scripture*, some Readers perhaps may think it not beneath a Wise Man's Care, to reflect, how *Faith* and its *Rule* may be reconciled together.

## I. POSTULATUM.

" All necessary Points of Christian Doctrine relating to God, to Man, to his Corruption by Sin, to his Redemption, and Justification, to Sacraments, to the Church, to a future State, to Grace and Free-will, to the Books of the Old Testa-

" Testament, and the like, were both  
 " taught and believed by Christians, before  
 " any part of the New Testament was  
 " written.

### II. POSTULATUM.

" All the necessary Points of Faith,  
 " above mention'd, were by Christ's In-  
 " stitution to have been convey'd to  
 " After-ages, altho' the Books of the  
 " New Testament had never been com-  
 " pos'd.

### III. POSTULATUM.

" The Holy Scripture no where tells  
 " us plainly, that it contains the whole  
 " Belief of the first Christians; or that  
 " all necessary Points of Faith are plain in  
 " it.

### IV. POSTULATUM.

" It does not evidently appear, that  
 the H. Scripture as yet has ever been the  
 " only Rule of any Man's Belief.

## V. POSTULATUM.

“ ‘Tis an undoubted Fact, that those,  
 “ who own no other Rule of Christian  
 “ Faith and Worship besides plain Scri-  
 “ pture, when they are once in Power,  
 “ will not easily grant the same Liberty to  
 “ others, by which they became a Body  
 “ themselves: But even disallow a free  
 “ and unbiass'd Study of the Holy Scri-  
 “ pture.

## VI. POSTULATUM.

“ There is such an Allay of Obscurity  
 “ in the sacred Writings, that they could  
 “ not bring all to the same Faith, Wor-  
 “ ship, and Communion, who desir'd to be  
 “ directed by the Scripture alone.

## VII. POSTULATUM.

“ To say that the Scripture alone is the  
 “ Rule of Faith, is only a genteel Way of  
 “ appealing to a Man's own Judgment,  
 “ from that of all Mankind.

## VIII.

### VIII. POSTULATUM.

“ Nothing was ever the subject of  
 “ greater Disputes, or is less fit to unite  
 “ Christians at present, than the Sense of  
 “ Scripture alone.

### IX. POSTULATUM.

“ All necessary Points of Christianity  
 “ cannot be drawn from the Scripture  
 “ alone.

### X. POSTULATUM.

“ The Apostles and Evangelists did  
 “ not write the New Testament with this  
 “ Design, that it might be a compleat Rule  
 “ of the Faith and Worship of Chris-  
 “ tians.

### XI. POSTULATUM.

“ The Scripture it self recommends  
 “ Apostolical Tradition.

### XII. POSTULATUM.

“ The Scripture also recommends  
 Church Authority. CON-

**CONCLUSION.**

“ Scripture is not the *whole* and *only*  
 “ Rule of Christian Religion.

**I. POSTULATUM.**

“ All necessary Points of Christian Do-  
 “ strine relating to God, to Man, to his  
 “ Corruption by Sin, to his Redemption,  
 “ and Justification, to Sacraments, to the  
 “ Church, to a future State, to Grace  
 “ and Free-will, to the Books of the Old  
 “ Testament, and the like, were both  
 “ taught and *believed* by Christians, before  
 “ any part of the New Testament was  
 “ written.

This cannot be call'd in Question, but only by those, who are so silly as to imagine, either that the *Gospels* were pen'd by our Saviour, not by S. Matthew, S. Mark, S. Luke, and S. John, or at least, that they were written in the time of his mortal Life. But as both these are universally rejected by all Men of Sense, the *Postulatum* will undoubtedly stand its Ground. S. Irenaeus long since observed, that none of the *Evangelical Writers* undertook that Office, till they had receiv'd  
she

*the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, L. 3. C. 1.*  
*Even S. Matthew, the first of them, did*  
*not do it, till he had preach'd the Gospel in*  
*Judea, for some Years after the Ascension*  
*of Christ; and was departing from thence, to*  
*plant Christianity in foreign Nations.*  
*Euseb. L. 3. Hist. C. 24, &c.*

Now, if this be true, as it certainly is, it necessarily follows, First, that when Christianity begun, the H. Scripture was not the *whole Rule of Christian Faith.*

Secondly, that the first Christians had a *true and saving Faith*, tho' there was not then any *Scripture* in Being, by which all the *necessary parts* of it could be *plainly proved.*

3ly, That before the Gospels were written, not only those Christians had a *saving Faith*, who receiv'd it by the *Mouth of Infallible Directors* (as, of *Christ*, and his *Apostles*) but also those who receiv'd it by that of *private and (in their own Capacity) fallible Pastors and Teachers.* Such as the *seven Deacons* might be, Act. 6. v. 5; *Philip*, Act. 8. v. 35, *Ananias*, Act. 9. v. 6, 10, *Barnabas* and innumerable others. It does not even appear, that any of the *Apostles* were *infallible Guides* during the Mortal Life of their divine Master. Yet we cannot doubt, but those, whom they converted,

verted then in their *Mission* through *Judea*  
Mat. 10. v. 7, Mar. 3. v. 14, &c. might  
have both a *true* and *saving Faith*.

Fourthly, that a certain, true, and saving *Faith* may be convey'd effectually to others by Tradition, tho' each particular Pastor be not Infallible. For that which was *actually* the Case of so many Christians in the beginning, is still *possible*. Nay it is still the Condition of most young People in Christendom, who are generally instructed in the most *necessary* points of Christianity, before they see the Bible. And it may be so, before they hear of it.

But what *infallible Rule* of their Belief can these Children have? The very same, which the first Christians follow'd, who were converted by the preaching of S. Philip, S. Stephen, and the other Disciples: I mean the *Doctrine*, which *Christ* deliver'd by word of Mouth, and confirm'd by Miracles. For this, being truly and creditably related to them, secures their *Faith*, and is an *Infallible Rule* of it.

## II. POSTULATUM.

" All the necessary Points of *Faith*  
" above mention'd, were by *Christ's Insti-*  
*tution*

" stitution to have been convey'd to Af-  
" ter-ages, altho' the Books of the New  
" Testament had never been compos'd.

This cannot well be question'd. For  
as Christ commission'd his *Apostles* before  
his Passion *Mar. 3. v. 14,* to preach the  
Gospel by word of Mouth, so he did af-  
ter his Resurrection *Mar. 16. v. 15.* And,  
without laying any Injunctions upon them  
about writing, promis'd to continue with  
them to the end of the World, *Mat. 28.*  
*v. 20.*

Now if this *Postulatum* be granted, as  
in reason it ought, this will also be an un-  
deniable Principle, that " *The necessary*  
" *Truths of Christian Religion can be surely*  
" *and effectually convey'd by Tradition.*

Indeed, if we reject this *Maxim*, we  
must either turn *Enthusiasts*, or deny the  
*Gospel*. For to pretend to know, which  
Books are *Scripture*, and which are not,  
meerly by inward Lights, is downright  
*Enthusiasm*. And to receive them for *true*  
and *infallible Scripture* upon *Tradition*, if it  
cannot be a sure Channel of reveal'd and  
necessary Truth, is *Madness*. For why  
may it not as well convey a Point of *Do-*  
*ctrine* as either the *Authors* or the *Autho-*  
*rity* of the *Bible*, that is of above three-  
score different Writings ?

## III. POSTULATVM.

" The Holy Scripture no where tells  
 " us plainly, that it contains the *whole*  
 " Belief of the first Christians ; or that  
 " all necessary Points of Faith are plain in  
 " it :

1. Against this, some have wrested the words of St. Paul 2. Tim. 3. v. 15, 16, 17, with very little reason : Since these only import, that a *Preacher*, whom he calls the *Man of God*, may find in the *Old Testament* (the chief End whereof is to lead *Christians to perfection*) a *large Store* both of Instructions and Examples for all *Christian Virtues*.

For first, in the 15th Verse he speaks positively of the *Scriptures* which Timothy had known from a *Child*. Which were doubtless the *Old Testament* only, no other *Scriptures* being then written.

Secondly, the *Scriptures* which are able to make a *Man wise to Salvation*, cannot but be *profitable*, either by way of Instruction or Encouragement, to *all the Duties* of a *perfect Christian*. But the *Scriptures* which Timothy read from a *Child*, that is the Books of the *Old Testament*, are able to make a *Man wise to Salvation*, v. 15. There-

Therefore they cannot but be profitable to all the Duties of a perfect Christian. And what does S. Paul say more?

Thirdly, there are yet other reasons to believe that S. Paul does not speak of the New Testament. For 1st some parts of it were not then in Being, as the Gospel and Revelation of S. John &c. 2dly, The part which was then written, was not collected into one Book, and probably had not been seen by S. Paul. 3dly, We do not find, that he ever gives the Title of Holy Scripture or inspir'd Writings to his own Epistles (tho' he justly might have done it) or ever takes any Notice of what his Fellow-Apostles had written.

Fourthly, altho' he had spoken of the New Testament, the third Postulatum would still be in force. For first, the Words of the 15th Verse, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus, may very well be understood in the two following Verses. For without this Faith no Man is either perfect, or thoroughly furnish'd unto all good Works. And if S. Paul only tells us how useful Scripture is through Faith, he does not speak of Scripture alone. Secondly, Altho' S. Timothy had read the Old Testament from a Child, yet he was without doubt instructed in the Principles of divine Faith, before

fore he was permitted to handle that sacred Volume : And 'tis only thus that the *H. Scriptures* are suppos'd to be read by others. So that this is a farther Evidence, that *Scripture alone* is not here spoken of, but *Scripture* join'd with *Faith* and those *Instructions* which all Children receive by *Tradition* from their Parents, Nurses, Guardians, Masters or Pastors. And after all, S. *Paul* does not say that *Scripture* is *SUFFICIENT*, for *Doctrine*, for *Reproof*, for *Correction*, for *Instruction in Righteousness*, that the *Man of God* may be perfect, throughly furnish'd unto all good *Works*, but only that it is *PROFITABLE* or of use towards all these Ends. And is it not absurd to say, that nothing is of any use for those great Purposes, but only a *TOTAL RULE* of *Faith*? Or that the *Old Testament* is of *NO USE* to Christian Perfection ?

Nothing then but Sophistry could ever have extracted from these words of S. *Paul*, that the *H. Scripture alone* is the total Rule of Christian Religion. The judicious Reader may observe, that the *Scripture* is not mention'd but only in the 15th and 16th Verse. And upon these Dr. *Hammond's Paraphrase*, is v. 15. Having been instructed

structed in the understanding of THE HOLY SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ever since thou wert a Child, thou wilt certainly, BY THE HELP OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE WHICH THOU HAST RECEIV'D, be able to discern and understand the Truth, and distinguish it from the false Doctrine of the Gnosticks. And v. 16, For all those Writings, which by God's Spirit have at any time been written by the Prophets &c. and as such RECEIV'D INTO THE CANON OF THE JEWISH CHURCH, may by us be PROFITABLY made use of, to teach us many things, that Christ has taught us, to convince us of the grossness of many Sins, &c.

II. Those Gentlemen, who alledge If. 8. v. 20, to the Law and to the Testimony, do not mend the Matter. From this Text indeed they may very well prove, that Wizards and Familiar Spirits are bad Interpreters of God's H. Institutions. But if they mean, that there are no divine Traditions, agreeable to his written Word and recommended by it, they are either Men of Design, or Strangers both to the Old and New Testament. But of this more hereafter.

## IV. POSTULATUM.

" It does not evidently appear, that  
" the H. Scripture as yet has ever been  
" the only Rule of any Man's Belief.

The reason of this is urg'd by a late Protestant Writer in this manner. Indeed, says he, *I have frequently known it suppos'd, that an Infidel may by chance meet with a Bible, and read it diligently and carefully, and so become a Convert to the Christian Religion, without receiving Instruction from any Person living, or Conversation with any Christian. But I never could learn, that any such thing ever happen'd in Fact — And that any one ever did learn the whole Doctrine of Christianity, and arrive but so much as to a clear speculative Knowledge of the Faith and Worship of the Church of Christ, by only reading of the Scriptures, and without the Instruction of those that before him have been taught that Faith and Worship; I believe there never was, nor ever will be an Instance. Tradition necessary &c.* §. 22. p. 86, 87.

In short, the Argument is this. It cannot be *Evident*, that the Holy Scripture is the *only Rule* of any Man's Belief, unless it be clear 1st That he was of no Religion before he read the Scripture. 2dly, that

that Inclination, Interest, Passion, Prejudice, and Party, had no share in the Choice of any of his Opinions. For if either his *Choice* was influenc'd by these, or was made before he began to read the H. Scripture, how can I be sure that all his Judgments of Religion were determin'd by the *Scripture alone*? The two Conditions then now mention'd, must be *Evident* to defeat this *Postulatum*. But how can that be? For the *First* is evidently wanting in almost all who begin to read the Scripture. And the *Second* can never appear.

Ask any of the Reform'd Churches, What is their *Rule of Faith*? They tell you the *Scripture alone*. But does *Scripture alone* make them to disagree in *Matters of Religion*? Does the *Scripture alone* make Bishops in *England*, and none at *Geneva*? Or two Sacraments here and none in *Pennsylvania*? Does it make Women *preach* in some Congregations, and *always silent* in others? Make *Baptism* here necessary for *Infants*, and in the same *Street* not only an unnecessary, but even a *Sacrilegious Ceremony*? How can these, and innumerable other differences, be accounted for, in Men and Churches *guided by the Scripture alone*? Must we say, all Parties, but one

one, are *Hypocrites*? That they dissemble in Matters of Religion, in the Concerns of Eternity, and do not really believe what they profess? If we do, I fear they will return the Complement, and think they have as much Reason to do it.

Besides, a Man must have made very few Reflections on the ordinary Course of Things, who never observ'd, what powerful Influences the first *Impressions* and *Rudiments* of Religion have upon the tender Minds of *Children*, before they are capable of understanding the *Scripture*. These *Impressions*, how unjust or false soever, are commonly carried with them to the Grave. With these the *Eyes* are ting'd, before the *Bible* is read. And you may be sure beforehand, under what *Colour* those Divine Truths will appear. That most Children are thus pre-engag'd to some Party or other, is an unquestionable Fact. And what a violent turn of Thought is occasion'd by it, is no less undeniably evident. To instance only in the Reform'd Churches, which allow no *Rule of Faith* but the *Scripture alone*, 'tis fifty to one, that whoever has been taught the *Rudiments* of his Religion in any one of them, as of *Presbyterians*, *Anabaptists*, *Quakers*, *Socinians*, *Independents*, *Sabbatarians*, *Arians*, or what else

You please, will, when he comes to read the *H. Scripture*, be convinc'd, that the Doctrine of his *Seck* is agreeable to it.

For I am not willing to think, they do not believe what they profess. And, setting Interest apart, there is not *one in fifty*, that ever quits the *Side* in which he was nurs'd.

This then is a fair *Demonstration*, that the greatest Part by far of those who own *no other Rule but Scripture*, are not directed in their Belief by the *Scripture alone*. For, besides that the *Scripture alone* cannot lead them divers Ways, and into such Opinions as contradict each other, there is not *one Person* perhaps in *five hundred*, but in effect has chosen his *Religion*, before he examines seriously the *Scripture*. To which, if we add all the secret and forcible Springs of Interest, Prejudice, Education, and Humour, the Proportion is again so very much increas'd, that it may be doubted with Reason, whether any be influenc'd, in all their *Opinions of Religion*, by the *Scripture alone*. Especially if the *Scripture alone* be not by Divine Appointment the *Rule of Christian Faith*. Of which more hereafter.

## V. POSTULATUM.

" 'Tis an undoubted Fact, that those, who own no other Rule of Christian Faith and Worship besides plain Scripture, when they are once in Power, will not easily grant the same Liberty to others, by which they became a Body themselves: But even disallow a free and unbiass'd Study of the *H. Scripture*."

How necessary this Proceeding may have been thought and upon what Grounds, do not examine: But the Fact is too well known to be a secret.

The National Synod under K. Charles I. n. 1640, Can. 4. stiles Socinianism, a most abominable and cursed Heresy: And orders, that whoever is accused and convicted of it, be excommunicated, and not absolv'd, till he absolutely and expressly abjure it. Yet Socinians own no other Rule of Faith and Worship, but only Scripture.

The first Synod under K. James I. An. 1603, Can. 4. decreed: *Whosoever shall reaster affirm, that the Form of God's Worship, establish'd by Law, and contain'd in the Book of Common-Prayer, contains any Thing in it, that is repugnant to the Scriptures, let him be Excommunicated ipso facto, and*

not restor'd but after his Repentance and publick Revocation of such his wicked Errors.

Can. 5. Whoever shall hereafter affirm, that any of the Thirty Nine Articles are in any part Erroneous; or such as he may not with good Conscience subscribe unto, let him be Excommunicated ipso facto, and not restored but after his Repentance and publick Revocation of such his wicked Errors.

Can. 9. Whoever shall hereafter separate themselves from the Communion of the Church of England—accounting the Christians, who are conformable to her Doctrine, to be prophan and unmeet for them to join with in Christian Profession, let them be Excommunicated ipso facto, and not restor'd till after their Repentance, and publick Revocation of such their wicked Errors.

The Twelfth Canon Excommunicates those who submit themselves to be ruled by any Ecclesiastical Constitutions, made without the King's Authority. When the Presbyterians, in the late Civil Wars, and afterwards the Independents were advanc'd to the Helm, they spoke the same Language. Now is not Starving as good as Hanging? Are not Penal Laws, when put into safe Hands, as good as the Inquisition? But let the Difference be as wide as you please, can any Politician justify

justify an Encroachment upon Christian Liberty, and the Rights of the Gospel ?

## VI. POSTULATUM.

" There is such an alloy of Obscurity in the sacred Writings, that they could not bring all to the same Faith, Worship, and Communion, who desir'd to be directed by the Scripture alone."

First, A writing that is Obscure in Things relating to Practice and Manners, cannot without a Miracle unite all in the same Profession, who positively desire to be directed by it alone ; but must necessarily draw them into Parties, Factions, and endless Confusion : Especially if the Obscurity of it springs chiefly from this, that each Side of the Dispute, separately consider'd, has either an apparent Evidence, or a strong Presumption in its favour. Now this is so visibly the Case of the H. Scripture, in several Instances, that a Man must have a very small Share of Sincerity, who can deny it.

For Example: Did St. Paul sin as oft as he call'd God to witness in his Epistles? And can it never be a Christian Duty, to take an Oath, which is, for Confirmation to

*Men, an End of all Strife,* Heb. vi. 16  
 Yet we are positively warn'd by our  
 Heavenly Master, not to swear at all,  
 Matth. v. 34. And this is even recom-  
 mended above all Things, James v. 12.

Did St. John Sin, when he call'd the  
 Aged Fathers, i. Jo. ii. 13? Or St. Paul,  
 when he call'd himself and others, Do-  
 ctors or Masters Διδασκάλες? Yet we read  
 expressly, *Call no Man your Father upon*  
*Earth*——Neither be you call'd Masters,  
 for one is your Master, to wit, Christ, Matth.  
 xxiii. 9, 10.

The like Question may be asked of  
 the Day of publick Worship: Whe-  
 ther Christians are bound to keep the  
*Seventh Day*; that is Saturday, Holy,<sup>as</sup>  
 Christ and his Apostles certainly did:  
 Or must the *Sabbatarians*, because they  
 will neither keep the *Eighth Day* Holy,  
 nor work upon the *Seventh*, be listed  
 amongst the *Hereticks*?

Whether Children may and ought to  
 be Christen'd whilst they are incapable  
 of that *Instruction*, which our B. Savi-  
 our appoints before *Baptism*, Matth.  
 xxviii. 19. though when he bid his A-  
 postles to let little *Children* come to  
 him, they came not to be *Christen'd*, Lu.  
 xviii. 15, 16?

Whe-

Whether washing of Feet be not as much commanded Jo. xiii. 8, 10, 14, as either Baptism or the Lord's Supper? And whether it be not as much a Sacrement?

Whether Baptism, Confirmation, Act. viii. 17, and Extreme-unction, Jam. v. 14, were not all to be continued, or all to be laid aside, after the Apostolical Age, in which the Jews and Gentiles were cemented into one Church by means of Jewish Ceremonies, as Act. xviii. 18; Act. xxii. 20, 24, 25; Act. xxiv. 18?

Whether St. Luke has faithfully related the words of Christ, Luc. vi. 30? Or whether this be an indispensable Duty of all who have any thing to give or to lose, Give to every Man that asks of thee: And of him that takes away thy Goods, ask them not again?

Whether as Abraham and David had many Wives at once, the same be not allowable to Christians?

Whether the H. Scripture, gives us any Rule to distinguish, in that which Christ says to his Apostles, whether it be said to them only, or to them as Christians, or to them as Pastors in general? Or is it unlawful for a Christian to have Money in his

his *Purse*, Math. x. 9? Is he commanded to wear *Sandals*, Mar. vi. 9? And not to put on two *Coats*, Ib.?

Is a trading Nation exempt from the Injunctions of the Gospel? Or is it a False-Gospel which says, *Lend, hoping for nothing thereby*, Lu. vi. 35?

In Christ's Sermon upon the Mountain, Math. v, vi, vii, is there any thing Advis'd, which is not commanded? Does the Scripture set any Mark to distinguish these different Qualities? Or can a Christian love Christ and inherit his Promises, without keeping his Commands Jo. xiv. 16, 21, 23, 24?

Secondly, Scripture alone can never unite all in the same belief, unless they agree, what is plain in it, and what is not. But till one Man can see with another Man's Eyes, this is never like to happen. How many Party-quarrels and Opinions have been struck out of these few Words, *This is my Body, This is my Blood*? Yet all Parties protest they are in earnest: And that the Text is evidently on their Side. To a Zwinglian it is wonderfully plain, by meer Scripture, that there is nothing receiv'd in the Sacrament, but *Bread and Wine*. To a Calvinist, 'tis infinitely plainer, that Zwinglius is mistaken, and that the true

*Body*

Body and Blood of Christ is actually present, not indeed to the Sacrament, but to the worthy Receiver. But Luther will tell you, that his Brother Reformers are a couple of Asses. That they learn their Doctrine from the Devil : And that we must either charge a Lie upon the Holy Ghost, or confess that the sacred Body and Blood of Christ are truly and really present to the Sacrament it self, as well as to the Receiver, Luther Ser. de Sacram. Corp. et Sang. Chr. an. 1527 : And that all are wicked Hereticks, who hold, that the Body and Blood of Christ are not receiv'd into our Mouths, in the Blessed Sacrament, Luth. Thesi 28. cont. Lovan. an. 1545.

And it is very remarkable, that there was never such a Swarm of disagreeing Opinions known in Christendom, as since the Holy Scripture has been set up for the only Rule and Standard of Christian Religion.

Thirdly, Wagers are not the most Philosophical Proofs. But if the Bible were put into the Hands of fifty Indian Philosophers apart, and every one of them were desir'd to draw from it a Scheme of the necessary parts of Christian Religion ; 'tis more than fifty to one, they would neither agree in any one System, nor with that

of any Church in Christendom now in Being.

## VII. POSTULATUM.

" To say that the *Scripture alone* is the  
" Rule of Faith, is only a genteel way of  
" appealing to a Man's own Judgment from  
" that of all Mankind.

This fully accounts for the Observation lately made, that there was never such a prodigious Swarm of disagreeing Systems and Sects of Religion, as since the Holy Scripture has been set up for the *only Rule* of it. When *Calvin* rejects any other *Rule* of Faith but *only Scripture*, he appeals to *plain Scripture*. But *plain* to whom? Only to himself. Or if also to others, 'tis with this proviso, that they be of the *same Opinion* with him. Now is not this fairly appealing to his *own Judgment*, what Number of Judges soever, or Authority be against him?

Thus *Scripture alone* was the Rule of Faith to *Luther*, and all his Journey-men,  
*Carolstadius,*

Carolus Padius, Zwinglius, Ecolampadius, Melancton, Bucer, Stark, Myricus, Brent, Osiander, to the reforming Queen, to every Church, and every Child of the Reformation, whether Wise or Simple, Young or Old, Male or Female.

When therefore you observe a Man running Divisions upon the excellency of the Bible, and at length soaring so high, as to make it the *only Rule* of *Christian Belief*, do not think, he forgot himself in the Rapture, or that he will not find his Accounts at the foot of the reckoning. For by telling you that it is the *only Rule* and *Standard* of Religion, he discreetly makes his own dear self, the *Wise, Great, Sovereign, Independent, Universal Judge*, both of the *Bible* it self, and of all *Religious Controversies* that ever were or ever will be started. If so, t'would be *Injustice* to imagine, that he forgot his interest in the heat of his *Extasy*. No, he took the only way of setting himself and his Betters upon the Level, and of securing his Cause. For how could he put it upon a surer Issue, than by making himself *Supreme Judge* of it? It cannot fail in his Hands. And if any pretend to lodge an

*Appeal*

Appeal against him, to carry the matter to a higher Court, and over-rule his Sentence, he begs their Pardon. What if he be under Age, a Link-boy, a Crier of Milk or Mackrel ? This lessens not his Character. He is born to be a *Peer*, a *Sovereign Judge*, a *Pope* in Religion. What if he cannot *read* the Bible ? No matter. Let him *hear* it. And after such an Enquiry, as his Time and Abilities will allow, whatever he sincerely judges to be the *Sense* of it (be it to dethrone the *Son of God* himself, or the *Holy Ghost*) is so very Sacred, that you cannot touch his Person, Estate, or Credit on that account, without persecuting the *Gospel*. But what if his Opinion be singular ? What if all Mankind appear on the other side of the Question ? 'Tis all the same. In the Concerns of Conscience and Religion, they are no more his Judges, than he is theirs. If they condemn him, he condemns them. And so they are quits. This being the *undoubted Privilege*, necessarily consequent to that noble Maxim, *The Holy Scripture is the only Rule of Faith*, it is not at all to be admired, either that it has found *Abettors*, or that it has stock'd the World with more Reli-

Religions, than either Numbers or Names  
can reach to.

The distance then is not so great as it  
is commonly thought between *Rome* and  
*Geneva*. Unless it be this, that there is  
only one Pope at *Rome*: And in every  
reform'd Church, there are as many Sov-  
raign, Independent Judges of all Controver-  
sies in Religion, as there are Individuals.  
Nay *Sorbon* will tell you, that in some  
Cases the Pope's deliberate and mature  
Judgment may be over-rul'd. But let a  
Tapster's Boy maturely pronounce upon  
the Scripture; no power upon Earth can  
either reverse or over-rule the Sen-  
tence.

But if every Christian have an inher-  
ent and indefeasible Right of being the  
Supreme Judge of Controversy (a Right  
which cannot be hurt or even attack'd,  
without striking at the Gospel) why may  
not *Rome* pretend to it as well as *Geneva*, and  
*Clement XI.* as well as Mr. *Calvin*? Why  
does every Free-born Son of the Refor-  
mation quarrel with the Pope so hotly  
upon his Head, unless it be perhaps that  
his Holiness spoils his Market, and that  
two of a Trade can never agree?

rectem in studiis et rebus multis antiquis  
et modernis.

63 Horsay MS

### VIII. POSTULATUM.

Si in scripturam ei resumere possit ad T  
ut in ecclesiis diversis aliquod uterum si  
“ Nothing was ever the Subject of  
“ greater Disputes, or is less fit to unite  
“ Christians at present, than the Sense of  
“ Scripture alone.

The Reason is obvious. For nothing can  
be less fit to silence a Dispute, than that  
which is the very ground of the Quarrel.  
The Effect is entirely answerable. For  
no Disputes were ever more irreconcili-  
able than those, which have been started  
about the *Scripture alone*. And what a  
number of Instances have we of this  
kind?

Which of the Reformed Churches does  
not both profess and believe, that they  
have the *Sense of Scripture*, nay *plain Scripture*, for all their Differences in Religion?  
Upon what bottom did Luther build his  
Church in Saxony? Was it not wholly up-  
on what he esteem'd *plain Scripture*? Did  
not Calvin do the same at Geneva, Zwing-  
lius in Switzerland, Socinus in Transylvania,

Stork

Stork and Muntzer for the Anabaptists in Germany ? And to come nigher home did not Robinson and Goodwin establish the Faith of the Independents in Holland and England upon this Foundation ? Did not James Naylor and the Quakers build upon it ? Did not John Tracy, and his four Disciples settle the Sabbatarians by it : As Robert Brown did the Brownists, John Eaton (in the Reign of King Charles I) the Antinomians, Mr. Wh——n the new Arians, and so many others their respective Sects ? In a Word, do not all, both Old and Modern Controversies of Religion, roll chiefly upon the same Topick ?

Is it not then a fair Impeachment of Providence, to suppose, that the *only* Rule for ending Disputes and healing Divisions among Christians, is that which, for one Controversy that it cures, creates a Million ? Is this consistent either with the Goodness and Wisdom of God, or with the deep Concern, which our Blessed Redeemer express'd for the Unity of his Church, Jo. xiv, xv, xvi, xvii ? 'Tis strange, the Heart of a Christian should be ever capable of entertaining such a Thought. And who can sufficiently either reckon up, or

or lament the dismal Consequences of this fatal Error? that errors of men's opinions I question not, but that the whole world has been ruined by one single error

When Lucifer undertook to tempt Christ, his Weapon was *Scripture alone*. Then indeed he was foil'd: But has since push'd his Fortune with more Success against his Followers. What incurable Animosities has he both rais'd and fomented, what inconceivable and contradictory Errors has he advanc'd, under the tempting colour of *Scripture alone*, and plain *Scripture*? For my part, I cannot but apprehend, that he has ruin'd more by this one Stratagem, than the Gospel has sav'd.

Can the *Scripture* then be false, or can plain *Scripture* deceive any Man? No. But the *Scripture* is not always plain, when it appears to be so. And it is this Appearance, this *mistaken Evidence*, that has fill'd Christendom with endless Strifes, has thrown it into the most violent and opposite Convulsions; is the Rock of Scandal, and the Ruin of Souls. For nothing leads Men into such strong *Delusions*, as inspir'd Writings, when read without the *Key*, or when taken for such a *Rule* as they were never

never design'd to be : That is, when Pride is the Interpreter, and those Methods are overlook'd, which Providence appointed, to distinguish real Evidence from a counterfeit Appearance. Seeming Truth is the Seed of all Errors. And Satan never thrives so well, as when transfigur'd into an Angel of Light.

## IX. POSTULATUM.

" All necessary points of Christianity cannot be drawn from the Scripture alone.

First, it is necessary for Christians to know, whether it be a Duty or a Sacrilege to baptize Infants. But neither side can be certainly concluded from the Scripture alone. Under the Law Infants were circumcis'd. But is not Instruction mention'd, as a Condition requisite to Baptism, Math. xxviii. 19 ?

'Tis necessary for Christians to know, whether they are bound to abstain from Work on Saturday, the Seventh-day, as the Law

Law undoubtedly commanded Ex. xx. 10  
Deut. v. 14. For if Saturday is still the  
Jewish Sabbath. And none ever imagined,  
that the Jews have chang'd the Day of  
publick Worship. 2ly, All Christians sup-  
pose that Christ died on Good Friday, and  
rose again the third Day which was Sun-  
day. But it is evident by the Gospel, that  
he suffer'd the Day before the Sabbath,  
Mar. xvi. 42. Lu. xxiii. 54, 56. Jo.  
xix. 31. Saturday then is the Gospel-Sab-  
bath. 3ly, Christ approv'd the Command-  
ments of the Law, Math. xix, 17. On  
the other side few Christians make Saturday  
the Day of Worship.

Again 'tis necessary for Christians to  
know, whether they may lawfully have  
many Wives at once, 1 Sam. XXV. 43, & 9;  
similar Allegiance, Math. v. 34; fight for  
the King, Math. v. 39; go to Law for  
their Goods, Math. v. 40. None of which  
Points, as Christians commonly resolve  
them, can be decided by the Scripture  
alone.

'Tis also necessary for Christians to know  
whether they are bound, or not, to ob-  
serve what the Apostles commanded as  
necessary

necessary, Act. xv. 28, 29. Which as it seems, cannot be done by the Scripture alone. If you say, that St. Paul declares all Meats lawful; It may be answer'd, is't that he only speaks in relation to the Law of Nature, to that which was given by Moses, and to the Patriarchs, Gen. vii, 2; not to the Decree of the Apostles Acts xv. which he had sign'd, and which he bid the Christians observe Acts xvi. 4. 21y, that the Time, when his Epistles were written, cannot be evidently prov'd from the Scripture alone.

Secondly, if *Baptism* and *Ordination* be, as indeed they are, divine Institutions, 'tis necessary to know, how they may be administer'd. But this is what the Holy Scripture nowhere tells us. I know, St. Paul laid Hands on *Timothy*, 2 Tim. i. 6. So probably did others, 1 Tim. iv. 14. But whether this was either *necessary* or *sufficient*; again whether it was for *Order*, or *Confirmation* as Act. viii. 17, Act. xix. 6; and, if for *Order*, whether of *Deacon*, *Priest*, or *Bishop*; whether it was with or without any other *necessary Signs*, or *Words*, and what these were; all this, I say, tho' a Man pore his Eyes out, he will never find

find in the Scripture alone. That is the Holy Scripture no where tells us, what is sufficient for Ordination, or how it may be truly and validly perform'd.

Baptism is commanded Mat. xxviii. 19. and was administer'd Act. viii. 38. But in what particular Manner, it does not appear: Nor whether with, or without any necessary Words, or Signs. The Institution indeed positively requires the Action to be done *in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, Mat. xxviii. 19.

And the only true meaning of this Text may be, that without those words Baptism is null. But it cannot be fully prov'd from the Scripture alone, that they are necessary, much less that they are sufficient when join'd with plunging the baptized Person in the Water. As to the Sufficiency, the Scripture is wholly silent. Against the Necessity, it may be objected, that S. Paul gives this Rule to Christians Col. iii. 17, *Whatsoever you do in Word or Deed, do all IN THE NAME of our Lord Jesus.* Yet no one will think it either adviseable, or possible, to utter the Name of our Lord Jesus, at whatsoever we

we say or do. And S. Paul elsewhere explains himself, that he only means doing and saying all things to the honour and glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31.

## X. POSTULATUM.

“ The Apostles and Evangelists did  
“ not write the *New Testament* with this  
“ Design, that it might be a *complete*  
“ Rule of the Faith and Worship of  
“ Christians.

This seems clear from their Manner of Writing? from the Occasion and Circumstances of it; and from the Persons, in whose favour they wrote. For we do not find, that any part of the *New Testament* was penn'd to teach Converts the first Principles of Christian Faith, or as an *Introduction to Christianity*; but for the farther Instruction of those, who were first supposed to be *Christians*, and then to be *Readers, or Hearers* of it. *Hearers* I say: For in the Time of the *Apostles*, and even before the late Invention of Printing, the *Bible* could not well be in the

the 10th part of Christian Families. So impossible it was for it, in the first fourteen hundred Years, to be the only Rule of Faith by the private Use of every particular Christian.

First, the Epistles of St. Paul are all directed to Christians: To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, whose Faith is spoken of throughout the whole World, Rom. i. 7, 8. To the Church of God which is at Corinth, 1 Cor. i. 2. To the Churches of Galatia; Gal, i. 2. To the Saints which are at Ephesus; to all the Saints which are at Philippi; to the Saints and faithful Brethren which are at Coloss; to the Hebrews, holy Brethren, partakers of the Heavenly Calling Heb. iii. 1. &c. And if these last be severely check'd for their negligence, Heb. v. 12, as Persons, who, having been the first Disciples, stood yet in need of being taught over again the inefficacy of Melisaical Sacrifices, which is one of the first Principles of Christianity; we must not for all this suppose them entirely ignorant of their Religion; or that S. Paul there undertakes to teach them all things, which it is necessary for the Faithful to believe.

Secondly,

Secondly, St. James's Epistle is directed to those, who had before, the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jam. ii. 1. St. Peter's to the Elect, begotton again to a lively Hope, Pet. i. 2, 3.. St. John's, to his Children. St. Jude's to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserv'd in Jesus Christ, v. 1. To the Revelation is directed to the Seven churches which are in Asia, Rev. i. 4.

Thirdly, As to the Gospels, S. Jerom and Eusebius inform us, That S. Matthew wrote his Gospel for the Christians in Judea; S. Mark for the Christians at Rome. S. Luke directed his Gospel (and afterwards the Acts) to Theophilus, who had been already instructed in the Christian Faith, v. i. 4. S. John compos'd his Gospels for the Christians in Asia, and, if we believe S. Jerom, at their Importunity, Pref. in Mat. or it seems, the Apostles were more inclin'd to teach, than to write says Eusebius, L. 3. Hist. C. 24. So that, in all Appearance, they knew nothing at all of this new Fundamental Doctrine, That the *Bible is the only Rule of Christian Religion.*

And we have as little Reason to believe, that even their Master design'd any such Thing.

Thing. His Desire was, that not only the *Apostles*, but that all, says he, who shall believe in me through their Preaching, may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that they may be made perfectly one, Jo. xvii. 20, 21, 23. That they may be of one Accord, of one Mind, 1 Phil. ii. 2. That they may be one Body, and one Spirit, Eph. iv. 4. That they may all speak the same thing, that there be no Divisions amongst them, but that they be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment, 1 Cor. i. 10. But can any Thing be imagin'd, less adapted to this great End, than an *Obscure Rule of Faith*? Or, which is the same Thing, that an *Obscure Writing* should be the only Standard, Rule, and Center of Unity in Religion? A Writing, in which there is such a Mixture of Obscurity, that even those, who in their Opinion, sincerely desire to be directed by it alone, could yet never perfectly agree, what is plain in it, what is not; what is necessary to be profess'd, what is not; or where the Term of Communion ought to be fix'd? Is it not altogether inconsistent with the Goodness of God, to bid all Men live in the Bond of perfect Peace and Unity, by this Rule or

? You may as well tell me, that Providence does not take care of the Means; that Impossibility is part of our Duty; or that it is not absurd, to bid a Man fetch Water, and to give him nothing but a sieve to fetch it in.

I have heard of many incredible Opinions: And perhaps the Abettors of this will think I bear too hard upon their judgment, if I tell them, it cannot be easily match'd. But thus much, I hope, may be said without Offense, that nothing but Interest and Heat could have kept it so long in Credit.

## XI. POSTULATUM.

“ The Scripture it self recommends Apostolical Tradition.”

I shall set down the Proof in the Words of a late English Divine. “ Even the Scripture it self, says he, sends us to Tradition. Remember the Days of Old, says Moses, consider the Years of many Generations: Ask thy Father, and he will

C

“ *them*

" shew thee, thy Elders and they will tell thee,  
 " Deut. xxxii. 7. So also Jeremiah ex-  
 " horts in God's Name, saying, Thus says  
 " the Lord, stand in the Way and see, and  
 " ask for the old Paths, where is the good  
 " Way, and walk therein, and you shall find  
 " rest for your Souls, Jer. vi. 16. So  
 " Isaiah calls the People, Is. viii. 20; not  
 " only to the Law, but to the Testimony, or  
 " to the Tradition of their Fathers also.  
 " Likewise St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 2. Now  
 " I praise you, Brethren, because you re-  
 " member me in all Things, and keep my  
 " Παραδόσις (for so it is in the Original)  
 " the Traditions; as I deliver'd them to you.  
 " Again he says, 2 Thes. ii. 15. There-  
 " fore, Brethren, stand fast, and hold the  
 " Traditions which you have been taught, whe-  
 " ther by Word or our Epistle. And soon  
 " after he says, 2 Thes. iii. 6. Now we  
 " command you, Brethren, in the Name of  
 " our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw  
 " your selves from every Brother that walks  
 " disorderly, and not after the Tradition  
 " which he receiv'd of us. Here we see  
 " plain mention of St. Paul's Traditions,  
 " consequently of Apostolical Traditions, de-  
 " liver'd by Word of Mouth, as well as by  
 " Epistles, or in Writing, and a Condem-  
 " nation

nation of those who do not equally observe both." *Tradit. necess.* p. 32, 33.

As the Apostles had never any design of committing all the necessary Parts of Christianity to Writing, so they were extremely vigilant in giving full Instructions to those whom they ordain'd, that they also might be able to teach them to others. These Instructions are that Depositum of which St. Paul says to Timothy, "Timothy keep that which is committed to thy Trust," 1 Tim. vi. 20. and, hold fast the Form of sound Words; he does not say, which thou hast read, but which thou hast heard of me; that good Thing, which was committed to thee, keep by the H. Ghost which dwelleth in us; 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. And more fully, "The Things which thou hast heard from me before many Witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful Men, who may be able to teach others also," 2 Tim. ii. 2.

Thus it is evident from the Scriptures themselves (says the Writer now mention'd, and bitter Enemy of the Church of Rome, p. 78) that the whole of Christianity was at first deliver'd to the Bishops, succeeding the Apostles, by Oral Tradition: And they were also com-

C 2 . . . manded

manded to keep it, and deliver it to their Successors in the same manner. Nor is it anywhere said in the Scripture by St. Paul, or any other of the Apostles, that they would either jointly or separately, write down all that they had taught as necessary to Salvation; or that they would make such a complete Canon of them, that nothing should be necessary to Salvation, but what should be found in those Writings.

Again, to imagine, that either the Apostles, or their immediate Successors put the Bible into the Hands of the People, and bid them hammer their Religion out of it, would be a wild and groundless Fancy. For in the End of the next Age after the Apostles, S. Irenaeus informs us, L. 3. C. 4. That there were **MANY NATIONS**, which had receiv'd Christianity (with Salvation written in their Hearts) and which carefully preserv'd the ancient Tradition, without having the written Word amongst them. But that these good Men should be so long deprived of the only Rule of Faith's unaccountable.

Besides, there must have been some Reason, and a very good one too, why our Saviour charg'd his Apostles so often to preach the Gospel, but said not one Word (that we know of) about writing it. Now methinks it is somewhat strange, that he should give so many particular Advices concerning Christianity, and yet pass that over in Silence, which was to be the **ONLY RULE** of Christian Religion for above Fifteen hundred Years.

He bids the Jewish Doctors indeed, Jo. 39. 31 if the English Translation be right : For the Original, *τί περιέσται τοις γέγονοις;* may be as well translated, you search the Scriptures : Without any Command of doing so) to search the Old Testament. But this was on a particular Occasion only, and for resolving a Question in which the Old Testament is plain ; specially if the Instruction, Life, and Miracles of Christ, Jo. v. 36. be join'd as a comment to it. For Christ is the End of the Law, Rom. x. 4. As for the New Testament, we do not find it mention'd by him, either there, or any where else.

But can necessary Points of Religion be convey'd surely by Tradition alone? God commanded Circumcision to Abraham and his Posterity, an everlasting Covenant, Gen. xvii. 7. Yet, for the first 400 Years, he appointed nothing but Tradition for the Conveyance of it. Before the Deluge we find the distinction of clean and unclean Creatures, Gen. vii. 2. and that the Second Day was blessed and sanctified at the very Creation, Gen. ii. 3. But what was there to convey these, or the Faith of the Patriarchs, till the Books of Moses were written (that is for above Two Thousand Years) besides Tradition? And what else have the Faithful had to convey Moses's Books and their Authority, for a much longer space; and even the New Testament for above Sixteen hundred Years. Either then Tradition can effectually convey an Article of Faith above a Thousand Years, or it cannot. If it can, the Objection is Childish. If it cannot, it is not an Article of Faith, that any Part, now extant either of the Old or New Testament, Scripture.

## XII. POSTULATUM.

"The Scripture also recommends Church  
Authority.

It appears by the *Gospel*, Mat. x. 2. Luk. x. 1. That *Christ*, whilst on Earth, set apart an Order of Men (to which Order St. Paul was afterwards added) above Fourscore in Number, who, were to explain to all others the *Sense of the Bible*, and the *Truths of Christianity*. To these he said, *He that hears you, hears me*, Luke x. 16. *He open'd their Minds, that they might understand the Scriptures*, Luke xxiv. 45. And bid them *teach all Nations*, Mat. xxviii. 19.

'Tis true their *Commission*, at least that of the Apostles, was not confin'd to an *Oral Tradition* (tho' their Divine Founder, and the greater part of them never used any other) but might be executed in *Writing*, if they thought fit. And six of this Number (besides two of their Disciples, S. Mark and S. Luke) have left us some-

thing under their own Hands concerning  
Christ and his Doctrine.

M G T R A I C T 2 O Y IX

But 1<sup>st</sup>, As I observ'd already, it does not appear that they had any Design of putting the *Whole* in Writing: Much less that their Books should abridge the Authority either of the *Writers* themselves, or of the rest of their Venerable Order. 2<sup>dly</sup>, 'Tis evident, that even what they writ, was not set down in the plainest *Manner*: But might still be interpreted, either by the *Authors*, or by those whose *Office* it was, by the Institution of Christ, not only to teach others the necessary Truths of Christian Religion, but also to explain the *Scriptures* to them. Neither was this Order of Men to cease. For Christ has positively engag'd his sacred Word to continue with them to the End of the World, Mat. xxviii. 20.

Here then is *Church-Authority* (for explaining Scripture, and what Christ delivered by Word of Mouth, or the *unwritten Word*) so visibly establish'd by the Son of God himself, that a Man must shut his Eyes against the Light to be ignorant of it. Before a Syllable of the *New Testament*

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ment is writ, he gives the *Pastors* of his Church, full Authority of teaching the People both the true Sense of Scripture, and all Christian Truths. He assures them, this Authority shall never expire, but shall subsist at all Times to the very End of the World. The New Testament is penn'd with such a Mixture of real and apparent Evidence, that it cannot be the only Rule of Faith and Unity. Those, who pretend to be directed by the *Scripture alone* are fall'n already into almost infinite Divisions: Are moldering every Day into new Discords: And running still farther and farther from Unity; which even the strongest Ties of human Laws and penal Discouragements cannot preserve. Yet to own the Necessity of Church-Guides, must pass after all for Bigotism and Priest-craft.

If it be really so, S. Paul was for carrying on the Trade. For he is positive, that Christ gave to his Church (besides the Apostles and Evangelists) *Pastors and Teachers*, for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till all come into the Unity of the Faith, that is, to the End of the World; that henceforth they be no more like Children ross'd to and fro, and carried about with every wind

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of Doctrine by the flight of Men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lye in wait to deceive, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13, 14. It seems S. Paul, and our modern Refiners, had a very different Idea of *Church Guides*. These bid us, beware of our *Leaders*, teach our *Directors*, over-rule our *Judges*, trample upon *Authority*, that we be not Priest-ridden Slaves, and Bigots. And by following the Advice, we have almost lost the very Name of Christianity, and bid fair for setting up a domestick *Trade* of Free-thinking and Free-living, without any Check either of Conscience or Religion. But S. Paul is for the other Extream, which Christ himself took, and by which Christianity was settled in the World. He bids us rely upon our lawful *Pastors* and *Teachers*, and even follow their *Faith*. Heb. xiii. 7. with *Obedience* and *Submission* v. 17. A Language at this Time altogether unknown. He tells us, this is the Method which the Son of God fix'd for the *Unity of Faish*, and the banishing of *Scepticism*, That we be not like Children toss'd to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine by the Sophistry of cunning Man lying in wait to deceive us.

Into what Dangers the Neglect of this Apostolical Admonition has cast the Nation, is visible to all the World. I do not plead for any Errors of private Churches, or Men. The *Church*, which has her Commission and Constitution from Christ, can never want either Means or Authority of purging of bad Humours, and destructive Principles, which Part soever of her Constitution be attack'd. But to effect this, there can be no need of breaking the whole Frame which *Christ* set up, of overturning the Priest-hood, and advancing each individual of the ignorant Rabble to be so many Judges of Controversy in chief. such a profligate Remedy as this is worse than the worst of Diseases, and can end in nothing but utter Infidelity and Atheism. And, if a modern Divine may be credited, we have not very far to go. His Words are these. *The Christian Religion seems to be in danger of being banish'd from these Kingdoms. The Press groans with Atheism: Such horrid Blasphemies are daily utter'd in Conversation, and even printed and published to the World with such an astonishing License, as was never before heard of in any Country or Age of Christianity.* Dr. Trapp's Preservative, p. 250.

As to the Authority of Spiritual Guides, he argues thus. *The Scriptures are not always easy to be understood.* And where is the mighty hardship of being instructed by those who have both Ability and Authority to instruct us? And who have so much of both, as the united Wisdom and Learning of the Governors of the Church assembled in a Synod? How can we yield a more reasonable, and consequently a more free Assent, than by submitting our own private Judgments to theirs, p. 11. Again, when controverted Doctrines, says he, are obscure and hard to be understood, our private Sentiments ought to be over-ruled by the Decision of our Superiors concerning them, p. 13.

And a little after: *Nothing can be more rational,* says he, *than to submit our Opinion to those, who must be presumed to understand the Matter in Debate better than our selves,* p. 14. But the Order, which Christ has appointed to teach the whole Christian Religion, must be presumed to know it better than the People, and the whole Body of Pastors better than a Part. Therefore Church-Guides of Christ's Institution ought to be consulted, as the best Deliverers of his revealed Truth, which Truth is the only Rule of Christian Faith and Worship.

CON-

**C O N C L U S I O N .**

**" Scripture is not the whole and only Rule  
of Christian Religion.**

This must stand or fail with the precedent Discourse. But the Arguments which are commonly alledg'd for the other Side, must be consider'd in short, as far as the Subject requires, without examining in particular what *Degree of Authority* the New Testament gives to *Spiritual Guides*.

**I. O B J E C T I O N .**

*OBJ.* If God cannot speak so plain as to be understood without an *Interpreter*, how can Men pretend to do it?

*ANSWER.* The Objection turns upon a false *Supposition*. The H. *Scripture* might have been penn'd with so much *Evidence* and

and Extent, (if God, to exercise the humility of his Servants, had not otherwise directed the sacred Pen-men) that nothing should appear *Evident* in it, but what is really so ; that *all* reveal'd Truths should stand in the clearest Light ; that there should never be any *Need* of expounding it ; in a word, that it should be the *whole* and *only Rule of Christian Belief*. But a Man must have very weak Intellectuals, who can perswade himself, that this is the Case of the H. Scripture at present.

## II. OBJECTION.

*OBJ.* Either the *Bible* is a *perfect Rule* of Christian Faith, or it is not. If not, 'tis an *imperfect Rule*, and therefore it is not *God's Holy Word*. If it be a *perfect Rule* of our Belief, what need of any other ?

*ANS.* This is such Trifling, as a Man of Wit ought to be ashamed of. To try the mettle of it, instead of the *Bible* put the *Old Testament*, and you will find how prettily the Argument will squeak.

?Tis

'Tis this : " Either the *Old Testament*  
 " is a perfect Rule of Christian Faith, or  
 " it is not. If not, 'tis an *imperfect Rule*,  
 " and therefore it is not *God's Holy Word*.  
 " If it be a *perfect Rule*, what need of  
 " any other ? What need of the *Aposto-*  
 " *lical Writings* ?

All the Books of the *Old Testament*  
 ought to be believ'd from end to end.  
 If so, they are a *perfect Rule* of our *Be-*  
*lief*, as far as they go. But to be *inspir'd*  
*Writings*, and to *contain manifestly all things*  
*which God has reveal'd*, and *which Christians*  
*are bound to believe*, differ as much, as St.  
*Jude's Epistle* differs from the *Bible*; or,  
 as a *Part* differs from the *Whole*.

### III. OBJECTION.

OBJ. I said in my *haste*, all Men are  
 liars. Ps. 116, v. 11. Therefore bad  
 Guides.

ANS. Many are so. But if none can  
 be trusted since the *Apostles*, we must burn  
 the

the Scripture. For we have it not immediately from them. And it is above sixteen hundred Years since it was written. But if Men, since the time of the Apostles, can safely convey for fifteen hundred Years and more, above threescore different Writings (which make up the Bible) why may they not safely transmit the Rule of Faith, and some reveal'd Truths which are not clear in the Bible alone?

#### IV. OBJECTION.

*OBJ.* In matter of Conscience and Religion, there can be no true Guides unless they be *Infallible*. For if my Guide may mis-lead me, it is safer for me to go by *any self*.

*ANS.* True, if you cannot miss the way by your self. But if you be as much, or more *fallible* than your Guides, whom God has manifestly instituted for your Direction, why may you not as safely rely on their *Judgment*, as on your own? Where is the *Harm* of walking by his *Appointment*? And where is the *Security*

of opposing it? In this Case, one would think, good Manners, common Sense, and a small Degree of Christianity would turn the Scales. But Pride and Interest have a commanding Sway.

## V. OBJECTION.

OBY. How can my *Rule of Faith* be Infallible, unless I receive it from Infallible Hands?

ANS. Yet the Bible, I hope, is Infallible; altho' the Printer be not. And since it drop'd not immediately from Heaven, but was handed down to you by the Pastors of Christ's Church through a long series of above 16 Centuries, you must needs oblige me so far, as to answer your *Objection* for me. For, if what you say be true, one of these two things will necessarily follow, either that *the Bible is not an infallible Rule of Faith* (which all Christians, I suppose, deny: Tho' it is not the whole Rule) or else that *the Body of Pastors and Teachers have still a limited Infallibility*.

If

If you say, the Scripture is an *Infallible Rule*, altho' it be not convey'd to us by *Infallible*, but only by effectual and credible Means : I answer, that what Christ and his *Apostles* taught by word of Mouth, is a *Rule of Faith* no less *Infallible*, than what his *Apostles* write. And therefore if truly and credibly convey'd by *Apostolical Tradition* (and the joint Consent of those *Pastors*, whom he has authorized to teach Mankind all the parts of Christian Religion) it is to be receiv'd with a respect equal to that of the Holy Scripture it self. Now I stand upon it, that it is impossible to invent a good Reason, why a Point of Doctrine (as the *Trinity*, the *real Presence*, the *Necessity* of *Church Guides*, and of the *Peoples receiving the true Faith from their Pastors*) may not as credibly be convey'd by an *Un-written Tradition*, as the Authority of S. *Jude's Epistle*, or of the *Revelation*.

## VI. OBJECTION.

*OBJ.* 'Tis highly unreasonable for me to take my *Rule of Faith* upon any Man's *Judgment*, who is not *Infallible*.

ANS.

*ANS.* If so, you must not take the Sense of the Holy Scriptures by your own Judgment. For do you own any Rule of Faith besides them? Yet, I presume, you are not an *Infallible Judge*. Or if you be; why may not the whole Body of *Pastors* and *Teachers*, (instituted by the Son of God himself, to teach you the whole Christian Religion, and the true Sense of the Bible) have as good a Title to a limited *Infallibility*? Limited, I say, to the necessary Truths of Christianity, which were to have been deliver'd in the same Purity, altho' the *New Testament* had never been written? If you except against the *Commission* (which indeed puts Laymen under a necessity of receiving the Lights of Faith from their Spiritual Guides) you would do well to argue the Point with him, who gave them their *Parent*, and you your *Being*.

## VII. OBJECTION.

*OBJ.* The whole Rule of Faith ought to be recommended by the Strongest Evidence: Which

Which Evidence reaches no farther than  
to the Scripture alone.

two may v. l. intend yo' l sit to  
to ANS. The very Canon of Scripture (I  
mean the Number of those sacred Writ-  
tings, which make up the Bible) is not  
recommended by so powerful an Evidence,  
as the Authority of Pastors and Teachers is  
for the direction of the People. For  
this Authority till of late was never que-  
tion'd. But 'tis very well known, the  
Revelation and some other parts of the  
Bible, were doubted of, by Men of great  
Learning and Piety in the primitive  
Times.

Besides, we must either suppose the  
New Testament to be a Cheat, or else that  
the People may safely rely on the joint  
Consent of those Pastors whom Christ  
establisht to teach them the Sense of  
the Holy Scripture. He gave some A-  
postles; and some Prophets; and some E-  
vangelists; and some Pastors and Teach-  
ers——till we all come into the Unity of the  
Faith——that we henceforth be no more Chil-  
dren toss'd to and fro, and carried about with  
every wind of Doctrine, by the flight of  
Men and cunning Craftiness, whereby they  
lye

ye in wait to deceive, Eph. iv. 11. &c.  
 Behold I am with you always, even unto the  
 End of the World, Mat. xxviii. 20. He  
 that hears you, hears me, Lu. x. 16. That  
 thou may'st know, how thou ought'st to be-  
 have thy self in the House of God, which  
 is the Church of the living God, the Pillar  
 and the Ground of Truth, 1. Tim. iii. 15.  
 Upon this Rock I will build my Church, and  
 the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it,  
 Math. xvi. 18. If he will not hear the  
 Church, let him be to thee as a Heathen and  
 Publican, Math. xviii. 17. Remember  
 them, who have the Rule over you — whose  
 Faith follow, Heb. xiii. 7. Obey them that  
 have the Rule over you, and submit your selves:  
 For they watch over your Souls, as they that  
 must give the Account, Heb. xiii. 17.

If you say, all this is no more than  
 what is said of the Pharisees, Mat. xxiii.  
 , 3. The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's  
 Chair. All therefore whatsoever they bid you,  
 observe and do.

It may be answer'd, *First*, that setting  
 Christ's Establishment and the Pharisees  
 upon the Level is no great Argument of  
 Christianity. *Secondly*, that altho' in the  
 xiii of S. Matthew, there is no *Excep-*  
*tion*.

tion express'd in the 3d Verse, yet there are several made against the Doctrine of the Pharisees, in the very same Chapter. They are call'd *Blind Guides*, v. 16, 24; *Fools, and Blind*, v. 17, 19: *Serpents, and a Generation of Vipers*, v. 33. Their Doctrine is particularly tax'd, v. 16, 17, 18, 19. They will even contradict and persecute the *Gospel* v. 34. See also Math. xv. 3, 4, 5, 6. These Instances fairly demonstrate that an *Exception* must of necessity be understood, Math. xxiii. 3. And if it can be as clearly shew'd in any part of the *Gospel*, that Christians are equally caution'd to beware of the joint Consent of those *Pastors*, who have their Commission from *Christ*, I will freely grant, I have been under a Mistake. Till then, it would be highly unreasonable to do it. And I am pretty sure, that for the People receiving of the true *Faith*, there was never any other Method, either recommended by *Christ*, or practis'd in the so much celebrated three first Centuries, but only this, that they should follow the joint Direction of their *Spiritual Guides*. As to the wise and popular Scheme of giving every Man a Bible, and bidding him fish his Religion out of it, 'tis a late

German

erman Invention, which I dare say was ever heard of in the first Ages of Christianity. Nor was the useful Art of deciding all Controversies by the *Scripture* one, discover'd in those early Days. The rule then was, *Ergo non ad Scripturas præcandum est, nec in his constitendum Cermen, in quibus aut nulla aut incerta victoria, aut par incertæ.* Tertullian. L. de Præscript. C. 19.

The Objections against *Tradition* being tely answer'd by Dr. Brett, in his *Post-*  
*script to Tradition necessary*, I need not trou-  
e my self nor the Reader with them.

#### E R R A T A.

Preface. Page 11. l. 21. *happen,* r. *happend.* p. 31. l.  
26. *his.* r. *this.* p. 32. l. 10. r. *irreconcileable.*  
p. 41. l. 17; r. *Gospel.* p. 53. l. 8. r. *purging off;*

#### F I N I S.

(34)  
Preston, which I gave you  
is now in the City  
of New York. All the  
books are in good  
order, & I hope you will  
find them useful.  
Yours very truly  
John D. C. Jones

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20 JY 09

